

# Good Stories for Children

BY  
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## STRADGE ADVENTURES OF AN UNTRUTHFUL YOUNGSTER

The Story of the Dreadful Punishment of a Boy Who Would Not Tell the Truth

HERE was a boy living in a little country village whose name was Peter Adolphus Skinks, but who was always called "Lying Pete," because he couldn't tell the truth, even if he tried, which never happened. He could not relate the simplest incident without distorting it into an untruth. He had an uncle who was a student of occult magic, and who was perhaps the most learned man in that line on earth, for that sort of magic is the most difficult to study, but, when learned, the most powerful kind I know of. Uncle Hiram told Peter that something dreadful would surely happen to him if he kept on telling lies, but Pete merely grinned.

"This is what will occur," said Uncle Hiram. "Suddenly and without any warning you will find that the lies you tell will become truths, much to your own harm. It has been many years since such a thing occurred, but it's due now, for it happens once every five hundred years that the fairies find such a liar as you and put a charm on him, so that when he tells a whopper the very next minute it's perfectly true, and if you persist in lying, then I'd advise you to be very cautious as to the brand of falsehood you hand out."

This made Pete grin wider than before, as he didn't believe in fairies or magic. He replied:

"Tain't so at all, for I seen an elf, a hijus little brown one, a-sittin' on a brush heap, an' he didn't do a thing to me but roll his eyes."

His uncle shrugged his shoulders and did not answer this palpable untruth, so Pete took his books and started for school. He had hardly turned the corner of the road and was passing a little wood, when out popped, with a weird sound, a little brown dwarf and stood in the path. Pete shrank back as the elf cried: "Stop! I wish a few words with you. You brought me here by a lie, and you must lie me back again or suffer for it!"

Pete trembled, but could not reply. "Come!" cried the elf in a thin, shrill voice, "lie me home again, quick! A minute more and it will be too late!"

Pete couldn't find his voice, for he was too scared to speak. A minute passed, during which time the elf danced wildly about. Then Pete said:

"What shall I say?"

### Made All His Lies Come True

"Too late! Too late!" cried the elf, tearing his hair. "Now I must stay here ten days and make all your lies come true. You shall suffer for this. Go on to school and take your punishment." Then he vanished into the woods.

Pete stood for a long time staring in the shrubbery until he reflected that he'd be late at school, and then he ran all the way; but of course he was late. The teacher was busy when he entered, but she glanced at him in a way that chilled him as he took his seat. Pauline Wiggins chuckled and whispered, "You'll catch it," and in return Pete pulled her braid so hard that she squealed aloud.

Miss Anna Baxter, the haughty teacher, said sharply: "Peter Skinks, why are you late, and what did you do to Pauline?"

"I was late," said Pete, forgetting all about the elf, "because my mother fell downstairs and hurt herself, an' I had to help her."

"Is she badly hurt?" asked Miss Baxter. "Not very, but pa drove for the doctor, an' drove so fast that he ran over a hog and then ran inter 'Squire Meader's buggy an' dumped the 'Squire out inter the ditch. Pa was hurt, too, an' so I was late."

"That was no reason for pulling Pauline's hair, and for that you must go into the coat closet for an hour," said his teacher.

Pete went into the closet, where he found the teacher's lunch and promptly ate it. Then he rushed out suddenly, shouting: "There's a big mouse in there!" Just as he said this he thought of the elf, and thinking that if his words were to come true he might as well have a lot of mice, he added: "There's a lot of 'em, and some rats in there, too!"

As he had left the closet door wide open he could look into it, as could all the school, and he was quite as much surprised as any of the scholars to



### HE KNEW IT WAS A GENIE

see an army of rats and mice pouring out into the schoolroom. All of the children climbed upon their desks, and Miss Baxter jumped upon the stove, but finding that a warm spot, leaped to her table, where she stood screaming. The rats and mice ran briskly about the room for a few minutes, during which time some boy opened the door, and then they poured out into the fields. The school was broken up for the day, as many of the children were in hysterics, as well as the teacher, and they went home to find that Pete's other lie had come true, only with far more serious results. His poor mother had really fallen downstairs and broken her leg. His father, driving wildly for the doctor, had run into the 'Squire's buggy and overturned it, putting the 'Squire into the ditch, but unfortunately he had in the carriage a large package of Spink's patent fuel, a new substitute for coal that is very explosive indeed, which package came in contact with the hot axle of Mr. Skinks's wagon and instantly blew up both vehicles, sending both the 'Squire and Pete's father high into the trees and injuring them severely. The 'Squire had already begun a suit for damages against Mr. Skinks, which was sure to ruin him, and the road commissioner also had demanded \$500 for tearing an immense hole in the public highway. Later in the day a spark of the patent fuel, which had smoldered for hours on the roof of the Presbyterian Church, unobscured, burst into a flame, and in a few minutes the church was burning fiercely. A high wind was blowing, and before the fire department could get its coat on and lock up the store the blast had driven the immense flames against the office of the Weekly Symposium, and that fine two-story building was on fire in an instant, being filled with unsold papers from garret to cellar. Against such a conflagration, the worst that Pedankville had ever seen, the fire department was useless, and soon other buildings caught fire, so that in another hour the whole village was in flames, while the inhabitants ran wildly hither and thither and back again trying to save their property. Meanwhile, what caused the most alarm as well as amazement, the street was filled with rats and mice in enormous numbers.

### Repaired All the Damage

Pete looked at all the homeless people trying to make shelters for the night for themselves and their children out of tablecloths, sheets, shawls, wagon tops and the like, and shuddered, for he had some feeling left. His uncle walked away to assist in preparing for nightfall, and Pete sat there thinking of what a terrible deed he had done. Suddenly a thought occurred to him. If he had lied so that all the damage by another lie and remedy everything? Instantly he resolved to make the attempt, and, walking to a little boy who sat on a fence crying for his mamma to give him his supper, he said:

"Don't cry, kid. All the village is a-goin' to be built up again to-night, an' finer than ever. Every house is a-goin' to be four stories high, an' with gas an' water in 'em, an' all the improvements, an' full o' splendid furniture, too. There's goin' to be a barn behind every house full o' horses an' cows, an' all the stores an' churches are goin' to be built up a hundred times finer than before."

He had scarcely finished speaking, when he heard an enormous, long-continued shout that swelled to a mighty chorus of astonishment and joy as he ran toward the center of the village. He thought he was in a big city as he stopped in the central square

and gazed around at the tall, splendid buildings, the magnificent stores and handsome residences that faced the street. But in another moment he realized that his words had become true, especially as he recognized the names on the signs over the stores and street corners. He was very glad to be able to feel that he had made such handsome amends for his lie, but in a few minutes he discovered that almost all of the people were quarreling dreadfully about their property, several men claiming the same building or dwelling because it was near a corner or centrally located, while women were angrily disputing, jealous of each other's superb furniture, or spitefully accusing each other of sneaking into the best houses. Children were wrangling over new toys, and men were fighting over the possession of fine cows or horses that happened to be at liberty at the moment. The whole town in an hour was in a terrific uproar, while the tax board was in session arranging to instantly assess everybody hundreds of dollars more on account of the improved condition of things in the village.

### New Mountains Appeared

Meanwhile, the boy, seeing what had come from this last attempt, managed for many days to put a curb on his tongue, and his Uncle Hiram hoped that he had been cured of the habit. But, alas! it was too firmly ingrained in him to be so easily eradicated. I don't like that big word, but it's the only one that really fits. One day the elf appeared as he was strolling in the fields after school, and asked him if he would be good enough to lie him back home again. Filled with a perverse desire to annoy the elf, Peter instantly refused his request and said:

"You can't have nothin' nicer than it is here in your own home."

The elf began to cry bitterly, seeing which, the wicked heart of Peter was rejoiced. "Huh!" cried the perverse Pete. "Tain't the only place they's mountains. I've seen 'em bigger an' taller nor you have, plenty o' times!"

Now, he had never seen a hill higher than a barn in his life, but his bad habit asserted itself at once, and he lied whole mountain ranges that are in no geography book in any school. He proceeded to tell the elf all about the wonderful mountains which he had seen, and finally wound up by asserting:

"There they are, right over yonder, taller than the Rocky Mountains; but," said he, as he pointed toward the west, pretending to see the imaginary peaks, "but you are so small down there in the grass you can't see 'em at all. I often walk out there to them and sit on the very highest top an' look all over the United States for hours at a time. It's fine."

Pete gave a jump as he spoke, for he saw an immense range of dark blue mountains towering up in the sky only a couple of miles away in the west. The sharp-pointed peaks lifted one beyond another, and their tips were covered with snow. So high were they that they seemed to threaten to fall upon the little plain below where the village rested among the trees.

"They will surely be your undoing," replied the elf, gravely. "I can see your finish, Mr. Peter."

Pete, as usual, only grinned and walked toward the mountains to examine them at closer range. He

wandered along until he was far up among the peaks in the eternal silence of the snow, and then he returned to tell his playmates all about the wonders he had seen up there. As he went down the mountainside he met a funny old woman, who stopped him and said:

"Are you not Peter Skinks?"

Peter, fearing that something lay behind the innocent question, instantly took refuge behind his usual lie, and replied:

"No, ma'am. My name is Adolphus Geers. Peter is now in Arabia. He was sick and lost his teeth, so that he can't talk, and he went to Arabia to learn to speak gum Arabic, 'cause he's only got his gums to talk with, you see. I guess you'll have to wait a long time before you'll see Peter."

The next instant he found himself on a wide plain of sand, a plain so wide that he couldn't see the end of it, the Desert of Arabia, in fact, whither his last lie had transported him in a twinkling. Not far away he saw a group of mounted men—wild Arabs—looking curiously at him, and above them three tall palms waved solemnly. The Arabs, who at first seemed much astonished at his sudden appearance, soon recovered, and, swooping down upon Pete, took him captive.

When the sheik told him they were going to Mecca Pete was quite pleased, for he never saw that famous place where the bones of Mahomet repose. Before long he told the chief many things about America, and finally he said:

"In my own land I am a great conjurer and a wonderful animal trainer. In Pedankville I have an immense herd of wild animals all enclosed on a wide plain—elephants, tigers, lions, hippopotamuses, rhinoceroses, giraffes, zebras an' everything you can think of, from birds to snakes. All these animals are dreadful fierce, and would certainly eat me up as soon as they saw me, but I will tame them all in a couple of weeks."

Of course, all this instantly happened at home as he spoke, and the people, looking out on the field, saw them crowded with animals, but fortunately there was a very high wall all about them, so they bothered nobody, but just raged up and down inside, roaring, clawing and growling day and night. The sheik was much impressed, and asked Peter if he had the power to make a well of sweet water there in the desert.

### Back Home With a Camel

"Sure!" cried Peter. "It's over there now, right where you see those trees."

The sheik looked for the trees, and there they were, not far off, and, hurrying to them, he found, to his delight, a lovely well filled with the sweetest water, and cold as ice, which is unknown in Arabia. All the Arabs drank plentifully of this icy water, and soon had the most dreadful stomachaches. They wanted to slay Pete, but when the sheik told them that he was a greater magician than Solomon Levi they were frightened, but they persuaded the sheik to steal away in the night and leave him, as they thought that it was dangerous to have him in their company. So next morning Pete woke up to find himself alone by the well, with nothing to eat but dates, but they were very satisfying, and he didn't complain.

He heard a great, growling voice say: "Well, what do you want near my cavern?" Looking around, he saw a terrible figure, an immense black being with an awful red eye in the center of his forehead, and he knew that it was a genie, for he had seen pictures of them in his story

All His Lies Came True and Caused Him Lots of Trouble and Also His Own Death

books. "Well, answer me," bellowed the genie, impatiently. "Who are you and what do you want?"

"I am Solomon," replied Pete at once, "and I came to see what you are doing here with all my treasures."

Well, of course, the genie bent double and flattened himself to the earth, for Pete was Solomon at once, and he stepped upon the genie's neck to show his superiority, and then went into the cave to take a look at the treasures therein.

"It's all right," said Pete; "and now I shall turn you into a camel to take me across the desert." The genie began to howl, but instantly turned into a camel and was silent. Pete loaded the animal with diamonds, intending to take them away; but in addressing the camel he said:

"I am in the habit of driving far handsomer camels than you right in Pedankville, an' I want—"

Instantly he found himself walking up Main street in Pedankville driving a fine camel, and all the people staring at him and the children running after him asking him where he got it, and what he was going to do with it, but all the diamonds had vanished.

"Well," said he, "I can soon get back there, now that I know how, and gather plenty more, anyhow." He met his uncle at a corner, and he said:

"Hello, Peter. Where did you get the camel. Did it come from that lot of wild animals over on the plain yonder?"

Then Pete recollected telling the lie to the sheik, and he knew how the animals had got there. He replied:

"Yes, an' all them animals are mine, too. I got 'em in Arabia. I am going out there pretty soon an' tame 'em, every one o' them. You see if I don't!"

A few moments later he found himself out on the plain surrounded by ferocious beasts of all sorts, from elephants to snakes, all of them making eyes at him, thinking to devour him at once, and all edging up nearer and nearer, trying to get ahead of each other so as to spring upon him first. There was no way of evading them, as Pete saw at once, but as they came nearer he said:

"There's one o' them tall palm trees right behind me, and I am goin' to climb up into it at once."

### Killed by His Own Mountain

He turned and saw, just as he expected, a tall palm tree right at hand, and with one jump he was at its trunk and hurriedly clambering up.

Pete trembled and almost lost his wits. Then, as a wild-looking and very hungry grizzly bear climbed within a foot of his legs, he shouted:

"Look out! That big mountain is going to fall down on you this instant! Better get away from there!"

These were Lying Peter's last words. He never thought when he called down a whole mountain to rid himself of his enemies that he also would be right under it, surrounded as he was by all the animals; and so, when in a twinkling a mass of rock as big as all the plain fell with a sound like a thousand thunder claps upon the tree, Peter perished with all of the lie-animals which he had been instrumental in bringing to life. All Pedankville was shaken as if by an earthquake, and people looked to see a new mountain much closer to town in wonder and amazement, but nobody ever saw Lying Peter any more, for he was far beneath this pile of rock. And, strange to say, at his death everything was as it had been before, and there was no more dissension and bickering in the village, for all came back to what it had been before the fire, and people forgot that it had ever been different at all. Only his Uncle Hiram guessed what had happened, and he only surmised it, led to that conclusion by seeing a little brown elf sitting on the new mountain top and crying to go home. For seven days he sat there, and then he vanished forever, so Uncle Hiram knew that he had been freed from the effect of Pete's lie and had returned to his home in Elfland. But Hiram never made any effort to discover where Pete lay, for he was afraid that he might find him alive, and he thought it far better to have him where he was than threatening the village with more trouble. I think he was very wise, and I never felt the least sorrow for Peter, for I, for one, cannot bear a liar, and I'm glad the mountain fell on him when it did.

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